



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 1/28/17

**CONTACT: Paula Schriefer | President & CEO
Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning
202-361-6509 | pschriefer@springinstitute.org**

Congress Should Advocate to Restore Refugee Resettlement Program in Response to President Trump's Executive Action

Denver, CO - In response to President Trump's Executive Order on January 27, Colorado resettlement agencies, local organizations, refugee leaders and community members urge Colorado's Congressional Delegation to demand restoration of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program without limitations on refugees' religion or country of origin.

"We are demanding continued commitment to our nation's defining tenet of welcoming those suffering persecution and violence. Refugees have consistently entered the United States since World War II; halting this tradition breaks our nation's promise to alleviate the global refugee crisis," said Melissa Theesen, Managing Director of ECDC African Community Center.

This Executive Order pauses refugee resettlement, grinding refugee processing to a halt. Each step of the refugee security check process is time sensitive, so suspending processing means that refugees will be pulled off of planes, families who are anticipating their loved ones are devastated, and communities across the nation that have planned for refugees to arrive are left in limbo. This interruption forces refugees who were set to arrive in the United States today to wait months and even years to go through fingerprinting, interviews, health screenings, and multiple security screenings yet again, all while their lives are in danger.

Among those impacted are Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) holders--Iraqis and Afghans who served the U.S. military as interpreters or otherwise supported the work of the U.S. government in Iraq and Afghanistan. These individuals, and their families, have been threatened and persecuted as a result of this service.

Jill Fricker, Executive Director of Colorado African Organization (CAO), was reminded of the impact this decision has on our community right here in Colorado. "This morning I sat with a woman from Somalia who has been awaiting the arrival of her husband," said Fricker. Her husband, also originally from Somalia, has been in a refugee camp in Uganda navigating the vetting process for the last two years. "Today she cried and asked me, 'what will happen, will I see him again?'" added

Fricker.

The Executive Order reduces the United States' refugee admissions ceiling from 110,000 to 50,000 for federal fiscal year 2017, breaking the nation's promise to refugees and abdicating the United States' leadership role on human rights and refugee protection during a global refugee crisis of more than 21 million refugees.

Refugees are already subject to "extreme vetting." In fact, they are the most heavily vetted individuals entering our country, going through biometric screening, multiple in-person interviews and a dozen additional security checks in a process that takes 18-36 months on average.

"We urge the new administration to quickly learn more about the existing process from the expertise in U.S. government agencies, specifically the Department of Homeland Security and Department of State," said Jennifer Wilson, Executive Director of the International Rescue Committee in Denver. "Refugees are fleeing the violent extremism our country is trying to defeat. Shutting the door puts lives at risk and does nothing to make us safer. It further harms innocent people--mothers, daughters, fathers and sons--who are in need of a safe, peaceful and secure home where they are free from discrimination. It is irresponsible, immoral and un-American."

"Providing a home for refugees has been at the core of what makes us Americans since our country's founding," said Paula Schriefer, President and CEO of Spring Institute, "We urge our Members of Congress to restore policies in which refugees are not turned back because of their religious beliefs or because the countries they flee are particularly dangerous."

"Since 1980, Colorado has welcomed nearly 70,000 refugees and other populations of humanitarian concern from countries all over the world. Our economy and community has benefited from the contributions of refugees, employers in all sectors have hired refugees, members of the community have volunteered their time to support them, and they have become full participants in our society," said Frank Anello, Director of Project Worthmore.

Colorado resettlement agencies, local organizations and refugee leaders stand with our refugee brothers and sisters, those who are in refugee camps and urban situations seeking protection, and those who are here and desperately waiting to be reunited with their family members overseas. The United States is a country of immigrants with a long, proud history of providing safe refuge for the world's most vulnerable people fleeing conflict and persecution. We reject any action that undermines this tradition.

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Organizations signing this statement are members of the Refugee Action Coalition of Colorado, a coalition of organizations dedicated to defending the rights and interests of refugees at the local and national level and to providing a platform for refugees to share their contributions and concerns.

ECDC African Community Center (ECDC ACC) is a branch office of the Ethiopian Community Development Council. ECDC ACC is authorized by the Department of State to resettle refugees in the U.S. and has been welcoming refugees into the Denver metro area for 15 years. ECDC ACC helps refugees build safe, sustainable lives. ECDC ACC is a 501(c)(3) entity. For more information about ECDC ACC, visit www.acc-den.org and follow on [Facebook](#).

The International Rescue Committee in Denver is a local office of the International Rescue Committee (IRC). The IRC responds to the world's worst humanitarian crises, helping to restore health, safety, education, economic wellbeing, and power to people devastated by conflict and disaster. Founded in 1933 at the call of Albert Einstein, the IRC is at work in over 40 countries and 29 U.S. cities helping people to survive, reclaim control of their future and strengthen their communities. Learn more at www.rescue.org and follow the IRC on [Twitter](#) & [Facebook](#).

[Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning](#) is a nonprofit organization with a mission to empower people and organizations to succeed across languages and cultures. To find out more, visit our website at www.springinstitute.org and follow us on [Facebook](#) & [Twitter](#).

[Colorado African Organization](#) (CAO) is a nonprofit organization that exists to support Colorado's refugee, immigrant, and asylum-seeking populations in their pursuit of integration, self-sufficiency and freedom by providing services and programs to individuals beyond their initial arrival. Learn more at www.caoden.org and follow us on [Facebook](#).

[Project Worthmore](#) (PWM) was founded in 2011 as a response to the acute need for assistance of the refugee families in the local Denver community. Our mission, and the barometer by which we measure our work is to provide services and programs that foster community, self-sufficiency and increase quality of life among Denver-area refugees. For more information about PWM, visit www.projectworthmore.org or follow us on [Facebook](#).